The TOWER

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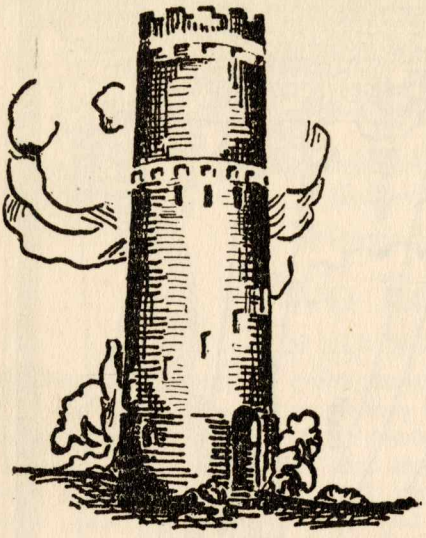

For many small and fluttering pigeon lives,
One Tower—one ancient Tower—will suffice.

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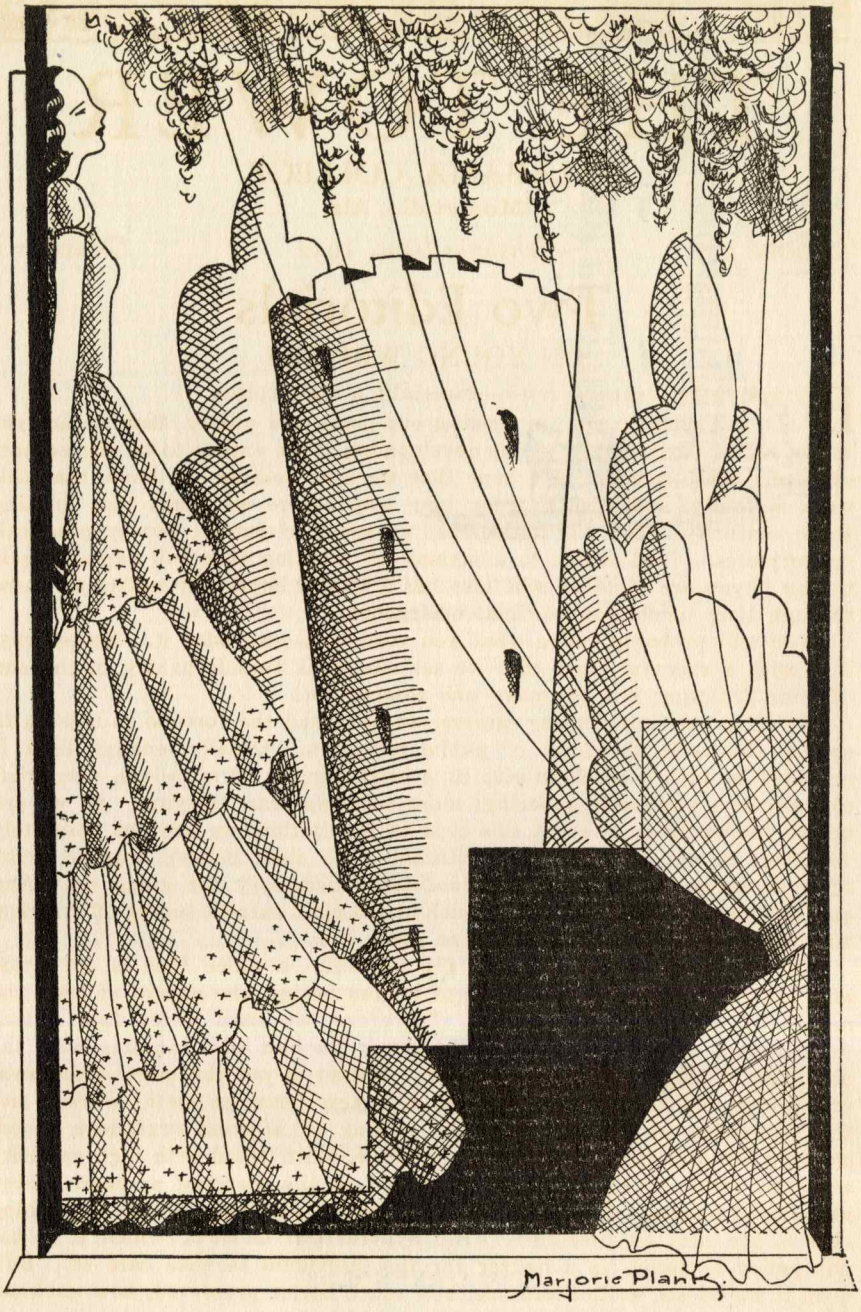
Marjorie Plank

THE TOWER

ALABAMA COLLEGE

Montevallo, Ala.

Volume 1 *Wisteria Issue, 1932* *Number 1*

Two Editorials

ON YOUNG WRITERS

Everything by stages, O critic—especially a masterpiece.

It will seem to you, in reading our prose and poetry, that we are yet in the rather early stages of our development if we expect to be the authors of future masterpieces. We hope that we are; because we know that this work is faulty, and wish to go a long way before we reach that limiting stage, maturity. You will notice that we speak of future, not hypothetical, masterpieces. That is due to a manner of thinking that will explain itself to you if you are someone who also has a vitally important matter to nurse through long incubation to final emergence.

You will probably judge what you read here—we wish it. Necessarily, it is with a cheerful trust that we set our weak vessels to dry in the sun of your criticism; but we make one reservation:

At different times in our careers, we have had the fortune to meet with sudden shocks in the form of public reception. Usually, enough light is provided by such a shock to give us a brief glimpse of ourselves. But that experience is extremely sobering; more sobering than edifying. So we are not so foolhardy as to court this type of instruction, we are not absolutely voracious in our appetites for criticism. We shall believe only so much of it as leaves us with the self-confidence necessary for going on. And yet, we think, we shall believe as much as the most earnest seeker of criticism who swears to profit by every word given him.

Of ourselves we say this: we are students—a name that is our pride and our protection—of the nature of human beings, the nature of love, the nature of nature, of everything. Therefore, we shall never face a lack of abundant material to feed our minds. To him who inquires with the antennae of his mind all things savor. Winter is not the mere withdrawal of warmth, but the sweeping advent of a new force on earth; work is not the restricting of pleasure, but the loosing of a great craftsman mood, showing the organism dominating, cogitative, alert, filled with high curiosity over the result of each new manipulation of the material at hand—often at its most lovable. The most exciting point in our trade is that everything that is life may be literature. The hypothetical element, which it is not our policy to admit, is a matter for the individual to take care of. But, even if we do not write literature, how much better preserved, how enriched and endeared to us is that experience which teases us into bending and

moulding it into a very object, more or less a work of art, but a perfect keepsake to us, forever reviving some lost flavor.

ON THE MAGAZINE

Those who have good memories will recall that the naming of this magazine caused us some anxiety at the beginning of the year. At almost the end of the year, it was still causing us anxiety. In spite of the generous prize offered, no member of the student body nor faculty could bring forth a pleasing suggestion. This shameful state of affairs went on until the Board of Publications took a hand. The Board, following the lead of Mr. E. H. Wills, business manager and well-known humorist, voted to christen our few thin leaflets "The Tower". At the same time, Mr. Wills introduced the troublesome idea of explaining in a line or two of poetry just what was the significance of the name, poetry to be included in every issue of the magazine. We did not appreciate this suggestion from our friend, the registrar. It sounded exactly like something that ought to be done, and we were embarrassed for ideas on the subject. My own conception of the meaning of "The Tower" was vaguely mixed up with the pigeons that more or less frequent the actual tower, i. e., tower—literary standards; pigeons—our efforts that fly off into new fields but nest on the old standard. This is apt, pigeons being the most foolish creatures ever made, and almost transient enough to complete the comparison. Or, possibly, pigeons—the editors who have distinguished themselves by circling about in a manner known to be pigeonic. However, none of these have dignity enough to suit us. Therefore, we are going to supply as the good reason for this name, nothing metaphorical at all, but the ambitious desire to attach loftiness, solidity, and social prestige to a publication still in the puking and mewling stage. The same logic obtains with those parents who have a little Charles Lindbergh Jones or Gloria Swanson Smith.

The "Wisteria Issue" boldly featured on each page is not typographer's error; it is the season's. The plan of identifying the season in this poetic way was suggested to the Staff by Dr. A. W. Vaughan. We do not wish him to be blamed for the lack of cooperation evinced by the wisteria vines, which we expected to see blooming so gloriously above the porch of Main by this time. Rather it is our wish that this policy of the magazine be continued in the future, dates of issue being designated by such terms as "Falling Leaf Issue, 1932" and "Tulip Day, 1933". The name chosen for an issue will not necessarily provide subject matter for writing, but it will furnish the motif of decoration.

The literary policy of the magazine is and shall be to accept original work of any type from the students of Alabama College, literary merit being the determining factor. In this issue, we are to a large extent, indebted to Scribblers' Club and the class in journalism under Miss Alexina Demouy, for our material; but there are also represented many free-lance writers of the school. The magazine hopes to encourage frequent experimenting in those students who wish to write, and to build up in Alabama College a tradition of literary aliveness.

On its first appearance, as the Wisteria Issue, 1932, "The Tower" greets you and looks to you confidently for a brave future.

The Tower

POETRY

Inspiration

She whispers low,
"Look up, you
Who stumble in the darkness!"
And holding to her fingers,
We go on
With flame-touched faces
Lifted to the stars.

—CLARA CRENSHAW.

Low Hangs the Moon

Far down in the
Purple-black western sky,
The moon is like a quarter
Of a yellow-orange-colored mellon
Sliced with a Sultan's golden scimeter.

—CLARA CRENSHAW.

Trees Against the Sky

Stiff points
Stitched on silver silk
With thin thread.

Feathery branches
Brushed in golden green
On azure porcelain.

—CLARA CRENSHAW.

Candles

Candles in small-paned windows
Edged with frost.

Candles in silver chandeliers
Hung with mistletoe.

Candles on mantlepieces
That furnish anchorage
For dangling stockings.

—CLARA CRENSHAW.

Poem

I shall be true to you,
If
Never forsaking aloneness
For other impassioned companionship
Is being true to you.

Henceforth, the discovery
That years of whole-souled, whole-bodied abandon
To love of you
Can come to be nothing—
Only a void of unfeeling—
Will disillusion any might-be illusion
Of immortal tie among mortals.

—JOSEPHINE MIZELL.

Leaves

Brown leaves are sere,
Like people who fear
Life and love and death.

Yellow leaves quiver;
Like cowards they shiver,
Fearing even themselves.

Red leaves are livid,
Like women too vivid,
Fighting middle age.

But green leaves are best,
Like people who're blest
With endless philosophy.

—MARY PLANT HANLIN.

The Wheel

Life is a wheel
That goes around
With endless turns.
It whirls and spins
With frightening rapidity.
It makes the swaggerer of today
Merely the corpse of tomorrow;
But that is the way
Of life!

—MARY PLANT HANLIN.

Born Again

I am born again
From a dim dark void
Of whirling chaos
And madness.
New life flows
Thru my veins,
And seeping slowly,
Permeates my whole being.
Faint tremors
Arise in my breast
And shake my heart,
Which for long ages
Was stone dead;
For life, as a gay mantle,
Is laid anew on my shoulders;
And I shall wear it
Very flauntingly,
Because you love me again.

—MARY PLANT HANLIN.

Cinquain

The moon
Hid in a veil
Of filmy morning-mist;
The stars thought her asleep and closed
Their eyes.

—CLARA CRENSHAW.

Insight

If anyone should chance to see
Her face, and name it, he
Would probably say "Tranquility".
But I, who know her lost desire,
Would call it, rather, "Smothered Fire".

—GRACE LANE.

Thoughts in a Picture Gallery

At the art exhibition
I was reading the catalog:
"So-and-so was born at such a time,
And painted this and that."
Someday I will be reading of you
In art catalogs,
How you began with childish sketches of your cats
(When we were seven and nine,
But they won't mention me)
Then the water-color of the girl
In the apple-orchard,
With the pink petals drifting down.
(I was she, but nobody knows;
And, sometimes, I think you have forgotten.)

"Sir Somebody is famous for this pastel.
He died in—".
Oh, I cannot think of death for you—
You so young, so alive, so ambitious!
But someday the date will be there—
Stark type upon a white page.

—CLARA CRENSHAW.

Prayer

Most prayers I say are merely words
I've heard another say,
And thought appropriate or lovely—
So I say mine that way.

But now and then a sacred thought
Comes to me from somewhere,
And I think for just a breath on God—
And know I've prayed a prayer.

—GRACE LANE.

Lonely Things

Three things there be are lonely,
As forgotten things are lone:

Pine trees without their murmurings,
In low, mysterious tone;

A nun without communion,
Bereft of every prayer;

A sorrow of the deepest kind
That aches without a tear.

—NELL KENNEDY.

Voice in the Mists

As I sat there watching those ancient mystic shrines calling all to worship, it was then
I wanted you.
I wanted you to come and watch with me while the flames danced slowly and the purplish smoke drifted upwards to be lost in the inky blackness.
It was then I wanted you, so I flung my voice down through the mists.
Did you hear me call?

—HENRIETTA ARMSTRONG.

Mine Until Another Billowing Wind

Around me is a gustily blowing wind.
It has torn from me my soul and flung it out where nothingness is billowing.
My soul, an anchorless ship, is riding out away from me;
Its journey is one in search of no resting.

Around me is a calmly murmuring day,
Coming toward me is my soul on a sea of wind steadily flowing;
Now, as a destined ship, it is riding near me,
It is mine—until another billowing wind comes searching.

—HENRIETTA ARMSTRONG.

But Worse—

I thought that I would miss you as the fairies miss the dew,
Or, as the elves, when clouds hang dark, cry for the gleaming blue—
Or as the northern glaciers miss the borealis race—
Or like a dog that longs for the sight of his old master's face. . .
But, I miss you like a heartache that's been wrenching me with pain,
Or like a desert traveler who dies for want of rain—
Or like the rasping sorrow of a poignant, keen refrain
That came once from a nocturne—and shall not come again.

—MABEL LUCRETIA PETERS.

The Insect

Along a crack, one season-ending day,
There crept an insect battered by the wind;
All slowly dragged along his slender limbs
The lustrous wings, and faintly fought against
The rough day's breeze. The dainty dragon seemed
With faded senses to perceive the day,
And coldly in this bright leaf flowed the sap,
No longer dancing. On his jetty eyes
I saw the film that curtained off his day;
From off his dainty, honey-sucking tongue
I heard this soft and pensive farewell sung:

"Flowers and summer, come into my heart!
I sleep, I sleep, I dream, and shall not wake.
No blowing dust shall lighter than mine start
From off its bed, when winds their wild dance make.
Upon the footsoles of the world I'll nest,
And dream upon the wind. Come in my heart,
Flowers and sun; thus in the earth shall rest
So much of summer, where this dust is part."

—MARY A. LITTLE.

The Iscariot

It was not I who hung thee there
With the rubies of blood in thy tangled hair
And thy sweet, pierced hands—
Dost think my heart would have let me be
A traitor to all humanity?
It was not I who hung thee there—
'Twas merely the other self who sought
My mind and soul to make distraught—
It was not I—oh, Christ in Heaven—
I see His face. . . I am forgiven!

—MABEL LUCRETIA PETERS.

Green Peace

Green peace, warmth, breezes,
Play hide and seek across the lawn.
Sometimes the breeze is the conqueror
And sweeps coolingly through the trees,
Ruffling the leaves.
And then the sun shines warmly triumphant—
Or both sun and wind fade,
Leaving only green peace. —GRACE LANE.

Maimed Marionette

I

Proud, in purple plush he stalked his little stage—
A King!
And stiffly bowed his subjects on their wooden knees—
Humble!
'Til Fate, in the guise of a lumbering orange crate,
Falling,
Splintered his slender body to wooden bits.
Cursing,
The manager pieced him together again—
Humpbacked!

II

Bitter, in grimy scraps, he bumps his clanking way—
A Fool—
His kingdom forgot in the passage of one short day
By others.
His is the Jester's part, and truly he has learned and
Rightly,
That King for a time, fool in the space of an hour—
Humor,
Indulged in by Life, making one man two, the King and
Jester!

—MABEL LUCRETIA PETERS.

Pharisees

They come to me with palms uplifted
(And when they leave, mine clinch in pain behind my back.)
They leave with fingers through which sifted
The material things I had they chanced to lack.
They come with smiles and go away with sneers
And laugh to name my many faults to others—
(I wonder what they know of fine, swift tears—
I wonder how they all feel toward their mothers?)
God, let them come, like black ants in a row
And carry all they may of worldly things—
I only plead with Thee to leave me yet
A heart that still may love—a life that sings!

—MABEL LUCRETIA PETERS.

PROSE

Confessions of a Spinster

By JOSEPHINE MIZELL

MY mother is beginning to worry in her motherly, affectionate way about her cold-hearted daughter. The daughter is beginning to be of some age—I shall soon be twenty—and has not yet manifested the slightest feminine interest in that means of establishing a cozy little nest, that potential object for a continuous flow of amorous attention and motherly care, that outlet for every real woman's housewifely instincts, that possible giver of little jewels of life to cherish and nourish, that ultimate word in all that is worth attaining—the male. To translate Mother's Victorian and archaic thoughts to the more realistic lingo of this impudent age, I have not yet started simpering over men in such a way as to bring them 'round to dragging me to a parlor-bedroom-and-sink affair (where the sink would, of course, be always full of dirty dishes), so that I could spend my days cooking beef-steaks just the way some big gawk likes them, darning said gawk's socks, listening credulously to his one-hundred-and-forty-second recital of how he almost made a hole in one, beaming on him like a little ray of sunshine when he returns in a grouch from his office, and devote the remaining time to safety-pins, hot-water bottles, and castor oil.

But, really, I am entirely in accord with my Mother's unsophisticated sentimentality. I am as horrified as she at modern flippancy towards romance and matrimony. My ostensibly unconcerned attitude has a much deeper psychological reason. I am really quite concerned. I inwardly eye every male I see or hear of with regard to his possibilities.

And I have found many, many whom I could spend my days in utter bliss loving, honoring, obeying, and frying eggs for. For instance—just as a minor example—there is the Prince of Wales. It is useless to elaborate on that, for what female—especially, what democratic American female—has not day-dreamed for hours, sitting by "Davy" and stroking his royal brow as he lies,

very calm and still and a little pale with a leg broken from a horseback tumble?

Mother herself, without the least intention of spoiling my matrimonial career, made my next most pleasing prospect as unattainable as Prince David. Although I would never feel inclined to read romantic poetry to this one, I would enjoy fetching his slippers and pipe for him in the evening, and, since I know just how thick he likes his toast and how hot his bath, we would never go Reno-ward on account of incompatibility. Lest I incur horrible Freudian accusations, I had better not linger over Dad's qualifications for the position under discussion.

Several years ago hope ran high—at last I had found The One! Although we had not yet met, I knew that since our minds and souls were so thoroughly attune, since we were meant for one another, it would be only a matter of time till our two lives would fuse into one and forever and aye we could—and then Anne Morrow came along and nipped that romance in the bud, so to speak.

Mother laughed long and cold-bloodedly at my "high-schoolishness" when she discovered my hoards of photographs of Clive Brooke;—and yet she thinks I am old-maid-minded!

I think I first noticed Toni, the plumber, because of his tragic look a la Clive Brook. But that is not all—he has the physique of Ramon Navarro, the lips of Gary Cooper, and the raven curls of Romeo (of course Romeo had raven curls). We could be perfectly happy, I am sure, except for Aunt Zenobia—Aunt Zenobia, loyal member of the U. D. C.'s and D. A. R.'s, Aunt Zenobia who had convulsions and hysterics when Cousin Caroline married a damyankee. No, Aunt Zenobia would never survive a Wop, even if he is an Italian nobleman in disguise, as I feel confident that he is. One must sacrifice everything, even the chance of life-happiness, if needs be, for one's family. Besides Toni smells of garlic and dribbles gravy down the front of his orange-striped shirt.

Someday, when I happen to cross that composite of Robert E. Lee and Don Juan, Clive Brook and Lindbergh, Lord Byron and John Bunyan, I shall abandon myself wholly to looking s. s. and g. (sweet, simple, and girlish) in frilly pink dresses (of course everybody knows it takes pink to make a man propose). But in the meantime it is skeptical "undelusioned" modernism for me!

A Book Review

By JOSEPHINE MIZELL

The Mother. By Grazia Deledda. Translated from the Italian by Mary G. Steegmann. 239 pages. Grosset and Dunlap by arrangement with the MacMillan Company.

That *The Mother* won for its author the first Pulitzer prize to be awarded to a woman author is perhaps the first thing to attract readers to this book. By the time one has read the Translator's Note and the preface, both by Mary G. Steegmann, one has reached the point at which the urge to read the book is almost inescapable, for the note and the preface are so extremely well-written as to assure one that the book is worthwhile in mental, emotional, literary, and philosophical qualities —in content and style. To quote the preface in part:

". . . the chief interest lies in the psychological study of the two chief characters, and the action of the story takes place so rapidly (all within the space of two days), and the actual drama is so interwoven with the mental conflict, and all so forced by circumstances, that it is almost Greek in its simple and inevitable tragedy."

And further:

"It is just a human problem, the result of primitive human nature against man-made laws it cannot understand."

After this preface, anything less than great literature would be disappointing; but, since *The Mother* is great literature, profound interest and sympathy are sustained to the end. The emotions and the intellect are both gripped by the presentation, in fluent narrative form with an abundance of colorful and picturesque background detail, of native human passion conflicting with artificially imposed, but none the less rigid, religious law. (". . . primitive human nature against man-made laws.")

The character for whom the book is named is the mother of a noble, idealistic and deeply religious young priest, who, unfortunately for his religious idealism, falls prey to passionate and forbidden love. The superb touch is added to this tragic situation by the mother's beginning—after she has spent most

of her life in making it possible for her son to become a priest and has trained him to be a good and great one—her beginning to doubt, on seeing her son suffer, the right of the church to deny to him a real home and family love, and to herself the blessing of grandchildren.

Sardinia, the native land of Grazia Deledda, with its crude half-civilization, sternly beautiful scenery, and primitive mixture of religion and superstition, is the setting for the struggle. So the story is a mixture of the elemental and the civilized in a semi-primitive land.

Realism and every-dayness in dialogue are sacrificed to dramatic effect. Spiritual realism predominates over external realism in conversational passages.

In a translation, one usually expects to find either awkward stiffness or a fascinating but involved quaintness of style. But the style of *The Mother* is so simply and rhythmically beautiful that one is constrained to believe it must have profited by translation, combining the most beautiful qualities of Italian and English. A few quotations may give a taste of the style and incidentally something of the flavor of the book in story and philosophy:

"She turned towards a crucifix—; and midst the shadows that her movements threw on the wall it seemed as though the Christ, thin and naked, stretched upon the Cross, bowed his head to hear her prayer. And great tears coursed down her face and fell upon her dress, heavy as tears of blood." (pp. 31-32.)

"And his eyes were dazzled as by the glitter that blinds and beckons, and the face he gazed into was not the face of Agnes, nor the face of any woman on this earth,—it was the face of Love itself." (p. 195.)

"The hymn was primitive and monotonous, old as the earliest prayers of man uttered in forests where as yet scarcely man dwelt, old and monotonous as the breaking of waves on a solitary shore; yet that low singing around her sufficed to bring Agnes' thoughts back, as though she had been rushing breathless by night through some primeval forest and had suddenly emerged upon the seashore, amidst sandhills covered with sweet flowers and gold in the light of dawn." (pp. 231-232.)

Moon Images

By SARAH STEVENSON

The young mother sitting on the door-step and crooning a lullaby to her babe, looks into the night-darkened sky and sees a cradle—a silvery cradle—which in the rocking has tipped too far, and spilled a bright little baby.

With wide, wonder-filled eyes a child gazes through a window into the blackness of the night. He sees a great yellow cheese which has been eaten entirely except for a little crust on the lower side and a crumb which has fallen from the rest. He wonders why the cheese is there in the sky, what makes it stay, and why it is sometimes small and again, large and round. He is sure it is a cheese. Nurse said it was.

The whistling, adventurous-minded youth, who prides himself on coming home alone after dark, sees a gleaming dagger with a drop of blood streaming from its tip.

Arm in arm, the lovers stroll along the patterned path, gazing at each other and then at their shining goddess of love and romance with its protecting angel nearby, and then again into each other's shining eyes.

There is the inland man. He toils long weary hours in a down-town office surrounded by the noises and confusion of the business-bent metropolis. In his short five-minutes' walk from the car line to his suburban home, he looks into the sky—and immediately goes sailing away into unknown waters on the silvery dream boat he sees there, riding so airily above a silver anchor.

The grimy, unkept traveler looks up to a brightly glowing lantern which guides his wander-lustful eyes into further unexplored regions. And oh! What is that nearby? One spark shaken out by the gipsy wind—so he sees.

But I, in my modern unimaginative saneness, see only, hung low in the deepening sky, a tilted crescent moon and, near it, a brightly shining star.

Wisteria Issue

Giardiola

By LENA CLAIRE SHACKLEFORD

BECAUSE Felice di Giardiola desired fame above all other things but one, he was in despair. He leaned his thin, dark face on his nervous fingers and stared across the polished table-top at his work—stared, hard-eyed, at the wreck of all his hope and dream.

Sunset of Tuscany flowed through the window, crimsoned the draperies, glowed purely and directly against the thing upon the table. She was beautiful—that calm little Virgin but three hands high, born of the solid, precious silver—but Felice di Giardiola knew that he had failed. She was a perfect, dead Virgin. The life that would have raised her from a masterpiece of craft to a masterpiece of art was not there. And Giardiola hated himself for his inability to give her that vivifying touch.

The quiet little Virgin for the Christi Chapel was to have won him the renown he had vowed to wrest from a scornful world, won him triumph over Andro Carlini in craft and in love, and made him worthy of the love of Gildaretta. His proud shoulders drooped, and shame, grief, and desire scoriated his heart.

"Ah, Felice, she is too beautiful!" It was a low, gentle voice.

"Gildaretta!" he cried huskily and stood to face her.

Gildaretta, the dark-haired, the graceful, the gentle-born, glided, with a rustle of embroidered silk, across from the doorway and stretched a shell-rosy hand toward the Virgin. Gildaretta! Her kind drive men to insanity or to immortality in obedience to a whim.

"The dear little Mother! Am I the first to see her?"

"And, God grant, the last!"

Wide-eyed, she drew back from him, half-frightened at his fierceness.

"Thou hast failed? But no, Felice, she is too beautiful."

"Thou seest," said Giardiola wearily. "There is no soul in her. Fifty others can equal the piece. I shall break it and never more work in silver. I must be as a dead man, for there is no life for me."

Before his soul loomed eternal obscurity, the mocking face of Andro Carlini, the scorn of Gildaretta. He saw Carlini as the master-smith of Italy, and he saw Gildaretta as Carlini's wife.

And Gildaretta laughed. "Nevermore? Thou art most tragical, O Felice," she said in gentle amusement. "Too long thou hidest thyself here and forgettest the sweetness of the world. Thou wilt be of different mind by the morning."

Lightly, she rested a hand on his sleeve. He stood before her, eyes down-cast and shoulders slack. If she had known the searing pain under her touch!

"Thou understandest not," he told her. "My Virgin would have given me fame; and fame, thee; for fame maketh right that which is presumption in the nameless Giardiola. Wouldst have truth; I give it thee!"

"Ah, I thank thee, but let us not trouble for that. Tonight is the last of Carnival. Be not serious tonight, but come with me in the candle game."

"I cannot!"

"To please me, Felice," she begged prettily. "Rememberest thou our first meeting? Carnival time, and thou didst catch the blossom I threw thee."

His voice was a husky whisper. "Remember! Thou rodest in a smother of roses in a high carriage, with thy noble friends about thee. I was hungry since the night and my coat in rags, yet thou didst smile in comradeship. How could I forget!"

"Then come. Those same friends wait in the carriage now without."

"I cannot."

"What wilt thou then?"

"I know not—only that I cannot go." The wine of his self-disgust was bitter; he must drink it alone and in sorrow, not mocked to madness by the revel.

"Cannot! Will not rather! Thou hast disappointed me twice—once in the Virgin and once in request."

"I grieve that it is true."

"Grieve? Thou? Then thou wouldst grant me my wish. Mayhap thy devotion is but seeming. Wilt come?"

Giardiola's dark head bowed still lower, and he steadied his under lip a moment with his teeth before he spoke.

"I cannot!"

Gentle eyes can grow cruelly hard when their owner is angry. "So be it," she said, turning to leave the room. "Andro Carlini shall be my gallant tonight. *His* devotion, at least, is sure."

She should rather have lashed him with a knotted whip. But the only sign he gave was a quick clenching of the nervous hands.

A knock sounded and Andro Carlini, aristocratic, powerful, bold of eye, booted, and gold-embroidered, strode into the room.

"Carlini, thou hast come," breathed Gildaretta in relief, advancing with a swirl of silk to his side.

"Most Beautiful, at thy bidding," and he bowed low over her hand.

Stricken-eyed, powerless, Giardiola watched his whole world reel away.

And then Carlini saw the statuette. A lift of an eye-brow, a sardonic smile, a glitter of triumph in mocking eyes—that was all, but enough to make his rival grasp the table-edge for steadiness.

"We go, O Fairest."

But Gildaretta, as is a woman's way, looked back from the doorway in time to see Giardiola slump miserably into his chair by the table and bury his face in his arms. At last her blindness fell away and she understood.

"Go," she panted. "Go, Messer Carlini! I will come after."

He obeyed.

She skimmed to Giardiola's side and laid a cool hand on his quivering shoulder, then dropped to her knees beside him and sought till her fingers closed around his.

"Forgive me, Felice," she begged contritely. "Forgive me!"

"Forgive thee!" Giardiola sat erect, hope, incredulity, and desire to believe breaking and struggling in his soul. "What have I to forgive?"

"Then tell me that thy affection is most sure of all things!"

Felice di Giardiola stood and reverently raised her, reverently embraced her.

"Then forget thy pledge to cease thy art," was her next demand. "For my sake, Felice. Make thou some lovely thing—even if only for me." Oh, how skillfully dark-blue, wide-open eyes can plead when they search a man's soul!

Joy incandescent flamed in him, transformed his thin features—joy, joy, life fulfilled! It shook him and flowed round him, shone in his dark eyes, pealed in his shaken voice.

"Go, beloved; I do thy bidding."

He would have knelt to her, but suddenly she was gone, and he was alone in the cool purple dusk.

The little Virgin glimmered with a pale, unearthly sheen. Giardiola lit the chain-swung alabaster lamp above his table.

Then with his failure beside him and the last orange streaks above the landscape beyond, he sat. He sketched feverishly, joyfully, wholly absorbed.

Seven sunsets flared and paled and the eighth was flaming before Felice di Giardiola, hollow-eyed from sleeplessness, weak from neglect of food, reverently set a radiant thing on the table by the window.

Not the mechanically perfect, dead little Virgin was she this time, but the living Gildaretta. Each dainty feature—the young curve of the cheek, the thin lids, the sweet, delicate lips; every smooth line of hair and figure and each soft fold of the dress—all were true. The rich sheen of the silver made a glory all about her—and in that glory she was alive.

Love had done what ambition and calculation could not.

Giardiola turned; the flesh-and-blood Gildaretta stood poised in the doorway.

Father Ryan: A Too-Familiar Essay

By MARY A. LITTLE

INTRODUCTION

My grandmother was an estimable woman, who held up to me in her precepting, many objects worthy of my reverence and admiration. Among these, along with the Episcopal Minute-Prayer Book and Second-cousin Hannis Taylor, who was almost a statesman, she securely placed the image of a poet known to his devoted Southland as Father Ryan.

When, in later years, I came to be ensnared in a course that concerned itself with writers, my mind returned to all this; and with a sudden, complete fervor, I yearned to investigate. I felt marvellously attracted to this paradox, this personality that contained the mind of a poet, the soul of a priest, and the heart of a patriot. Unquestionably, I had struck on a deep, rich, and noble—if somewhat forgotten—existence.

The following pages contain the story of my debut-thesis. And before closing this introduction, I wish to place for your sober reflection and careful weighing, this one key-question: How heinous a crime is held to be, in this country, the killing of a grandmother?

MY STORY RUNNETH THUS—

1. *SCANNING THE BIOGRAPHY*

A preliminary survey indicated to me that there were three great influences in the life of my poet—love, war, and the priesthood. I doubted not that these had made him a man of passion, action, and deep human sympathies, who had much to give in his poetry. Always on the lookout for the more striking of the problems which should flock from the study of his fascinating life, I opened proceedings from the biographical point of view.

Abram J. Ryan was born we are not sure where, we are not sure when. We can suggest two separate sets of parents for

him, with good arguments for the validity of either; but scarcely of both. We know only that he was not far removed from Irish soil at the time of his birth, and the brogue of Erin was on his tongue to the end of his days. There had been priests in his Irish-Catholic family before, we are reasonably sure; probably one of them was the priest named Ryan who was hanged for marrying a Protestant to a Catholic, before the time of Abram.

There was hinted in all the accounts, a deep and life-lasting tragedy in the life of Father Ryan, which had to do with the young girl called Ethel—

> *"A fair, sweet girl, with great, brown, wondering eyes*
> *That seemed to listen just as if they held*
> *The gift of hearing with the power of sight."*

I eagerly seized on this unravelled legend as the force which perhaps colored his genius and drove him into priesthood for refuge from the disintegration of a broken life, making of him a more noble Paphnutias. The narrative poem called "Their Story Runneth Thus" was my guide to the bleeding tale of the still mysterious parting. There were the two—young, in love, seeing Paradise everywhere and capable of performing wonders every morning before breakfast—then something entered, broke the charm; she fled to the veils of a cloister, he turned to the stern, self-dedicatory life of the priest. I looked for what was behind that strange sacrifice that sent two young hearts into irrevocable solitude. . . I found it.

When he was six years old, she once gave him a rose; and at eighteen, he had a pet name for her. . .

And then I had the summary of this love:

> *"But it was sweet and pure.*
> *There was no passion in it."*

I couldn't find anywhere that their mercenary parents separated them, or a blood-feud prevented their marriage, or even blackmail. I was forced to the bitter conclusion, after following the tragedy to its death-wail in a nunnery, that Abram J. Ryan simply went into the priesthood as some people eat spinach—of his own accord.

Well, this was disappointing. It was hardly an experience for my poet—only half an experience, and he didn't even guess at its significance. But many a man has lived an uneventful career, and still written of vital matters. It proved only that

my problem could not be "What was the influence of his passion for Ethel on Father Ryan's poetry".

* * *

On the third lap of the chase, I thought I had my problem. Moran again put his foot in it, this time in speaking of Ryan as a priest.

> *"Homer never rose above the summit of Olympus, nor Virgil above the level of pagan subjects and surroundings. Wherefore, the Biblical narratives furnish the highest and best models and the richest sources of poetic inspiration. . ."*

I jumped at this theory; I was all ready to make it my own and state as Corollary I, that, since Father Ryan wrote of the sublimer subject, he was therefore the greater poet, when held up beside any old heathen scribbler. The only trouble was, that I was not raised in the Catholic Church. Should I not take the standpoint that, had Father Ryan written Baptist poetry, he would have been still greater? If I didn't—what if my thesis came before the pastor? What if my grandmother saw it? Besides, I should have to read Homer and Virgil. It wouldn't do.

So, not as a priest, nor as a patriot, and certainly not as a lover, did Father Ryan present knotty problems that admitted of grave differences of opinion. He was problematic to me, indeed, but outside of literary spheres—could anybody have made him inhibit the spinach-eating side of his nature and so have saved him?

2. *FINDING INTERNAL EVIDENCE*

I chose at random what struck my imagination among the poems:

> *"When the flag of justice fails,*
> *Ere its folds have yet been furled,*
> *The poet waves its folds in wails*
> *That flutter o'er the world."*

I could simply see those wails of the flag fluttering—or does one hear a flag's wail flutter? Vivid enough, I thought, but surely this is one of those poems that Smith was thinking of; the atmosphere certainly veils its meaning from the gaze of my practical mind.

Another caught my glance:

> *"A statue for his tomb!*
> *Mould it of marble white!*
> *For wrong, a spectre of death and doom;*
> *An angel of hope for Right."*

There is to me nothing wrong with the sentiment expressed so exclamatorily in this stanza; but at one word in the second line, my mind balks, the machinery of my imagination bites down on a monkey wrench, piles up on itself, and goes dead. The word is "mould". I cannot picture any artist, no matter how inspired by the memory of Lee, in the act of moulding with his hands a piece of white marble. But then, perhaps we should not expect Father Ryan to understand these technical points of sculpture.

Said I, "We will make a survey of a poem in totum."

"Far from where the roses rest,
Round the altar and the aisle,
Which I loved, of all, the best—
I have come to rest awhile
By the ever restless sea—
Will its waves give rest to me?

"But it is so hard to part
With my roses. Do they know
(Who knows but each has a heart?)
How it grieves my heart to go?
Roses! will the restless sea
Bring, as ye, a rest for me?

"Ye were sweet and still and calm,
Roses red and roses white."
(I had almost said, "And violets blue.")
"And ye sang a soundless psalm
For me in the day and night.
Roses! will the restless sea
Sing as sweet as ye for me?"

Well, thought I, I'll give him time to get away from the flower beds and start cutting grass. I skipped to Stanza 7 of the poem:

"Roses! will you miss my face?
Do you know that I have gone
From your fair and restful place,
Far away where moveth on
Night and day the restless sea?
But I saw eternity
In your faces. Roses sweet!"

I think it was Smith who said that Father Ryan "had no fear of repetition". I looked at Stanza 12 and last of this rosary:

"I will come to you in dreams,
In the day and in the night,—"
(This looked as if we were getting somewhere!)
"When the sun's or starlight's gleams
Robe you in your red or white;
Roses! will you dream of me
By the ever restless sea?"

After all, the good Father's trouble seemed to be only a wish to exhibit perfect impartiality, so that he mentioned each separate rose in his garden at least once in the poem. I could have wished that he had gone to the trouble to give them individual names to create variety—Phyllis, Marigold, and Jane. But that would have been a dangerous thing for a priest to do; I might now be writing a term paper on the question "Was it a woman in Father Ryan's life, or only a rose?"

So there were the works of my poet; and the glibbest would shrink from planting his little argument on such barren soil. Smith was right, and I felt exactly like a mourner in a wailing choir.

I read the complete volume of Father Ryan's poetry. Nowhere did I find a fitting subject for intellectual inquiry or debate. The whole matter, so interesting on its exterior, grew smaller and smaller with investigation, and finally panned out into nothing, like an artichoke, and gave precious little nourishment on the way. It is here served up with a sarcasm of which the Father is really undeserving. His serious critics have mostly been enabled to treat him very gently because the man was so unassuming; but I wish to remind you that he disillusioned me. Let us deliver him back into the tender hands of John Moran for the final pat on the head and setting-sun comparison:

(The poet) "passed quietly away, let us hope, from earth to heaven, there to sing the glorious songs whose melodies are attuned to the harps of angels, and whose mysterious harmonies ravish with delight the pure souls of the just. As the setting sun on a calm eve sinks beneath the horizon, gilding the heavens with its mild yet gorgeous splendor, so did the grand soul of Father Ryan pass into eternity, leaving behind the bright light of his genius and virtues—the one to illumine the firmament of literature, and the other to serve as a shining example to men."

Contributors' Page

Equally indispensable to "The Tower" and to "The Alabamian," HENRIETTA ARMSTRONG, '33, shows the result of her experience as a newspaper woman in the facility with which she uses her pen.

* * *

Well accustomed to expressing her thoughts in graceful poetry, CLARA CRENSHAW, '33, member of Scribblers' Club, delights in writing brief little cinquains, each pointed with an artistic thought. We are interested also in her longer poetry and occasional prose, which show a variety of techniques.

* * *

For four years a member of Scribblers' Club, MARY PLANT HANLIN, '32, exhibits in her poetry a sure shaping of philosophy, and a contact with the business of living.

* * *

NELL KENNEDY, '33, a member of the Scribblers' Club, writes poetry with a haunting quality that compensates for the small amount that she produces.

* * *

GRACE LANE, '34, adds to her imagination a touch of quaintness distinctively individual.

* * *

MARY A. LITTLE, '32, Editor-in-Chief of "The Tower", has long been a contributor to school publications.

* * *

JOSEPHINE MIZELL, '32, Associate Editor of the Alabamian, and student of journalism, maintains a quiet practice of observation and weighing that marks her prose with unusual clarity and aptness. We have the honor of including the first poem ever written by Miss Mizell.

* * *

MABEL ("PETE") PETERS, voted Writer in Who's Who elections for the past two years, is a brilliant writer and one of true literary merit.

* * *

Another student of journalism, who makes writing a relaxation from her work as a Home Economist, is SARAH STEVENSON, '32.